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Luise Kautsky: The ‘Forgotten Soul’ of the Socialist Movement

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Abstract

This article draws on archival research to recover the legacy of Luise Kautsky – journalist, editor, translator, politician and wife of Karl Kautsky – who has been overlooked as a leading member of the socialist movement. First, by adopting a feminist historical lens to reveal the unacknowledged intellectual labour of women, the article reassesses Luise Kautsky’s relationship to Karl Kautsky and his writings. The evidence suggests that Luise Kautsky was essential to the development, editing and dissemination of the work of Karl Kautsky. Second, the article claims Luise Kautsky played an invaluable practical role as the hub of an international network of socialist scholars and activists, acting as mediator, translator and middle point through her extensive correspondence and by hosting members of this network at her house. Finally, the article recovers her labour as a writer, editor and translator and calls for renewed attention to her as an independent figure of historical analysis.

Keywords

Luise Kautsky – Karl Kautsky – socialism – feminism – Marxism

1 Introduction

On 1 May 1928, in the Social-Democratic monthly newspaper, *Die Frau*, Marianne Pollak paid tribute to a leading member of the socialist movement,

a woman she described as a 'living tradition of the [Socialist] International'.¹ The article continues:

There are people whose work lies in their essence. In the life that they lead, in the tradition that they embody.... Through her run perhaps the majority of human relationships which connect the International of yesterday to the one of today. Her unchanged youthfulness, her exemplary memory that keeps each of her precious recollections freshly preserved, the natural ease of her social appearance, her consistently astonishing knowledge of people in all proletarian parties, all of this makes her a natural centre-point of the International.

This woman, portrayed with such admiration by her contemporaries, was Luise Kautsky, wife and collaborator of Karl Kautsky.

Born Luise Ronsperger into a bourgeois Jewish family in Vienna, Luise Kautsky (1864–1944) was a journalist, editor, translator and politician. She was a gifted student who before her sixteenth birthday received her high-school certificate with first-class honours and excellent results in French and English.² She began working as a manager in her parents' pastry shop, at which point she met her future husband, Karl Kautsky, through her acquaintance with Karl's mother, Minna Kautsky, who was a socially engaged novelist. The pair married in 1890 and began their shared journey as leading members of the Social-Democratic Party and later the Independent Social-Democratic Party.³

Luise Kautsky became Karl Kautsky's personal secretary and assistant, working alongside him in his role as editor of *Die Neue Zeit* and as a prominent Marxist theorist. In addition to working with her husband, Luise Kautsky also began writing articles for journals, newspapers and magazines, focusing on women in the socialist movement but also covering other political topics. Her strong writing ability and journalistic skills provided her with a compelling voice as a political advocate. She also translated Marxist theory from French and English into German.

Around 1900, Luise Kautsky formed a close friendship with Rosa Luxemburg which continued throughout their lives and resulted in Luise Kautsky publishing *Rosa Luxemburg, ein Gedenkbuch* and editing and publishing a collection of Luxemburg's letters to her and her husband.⁴ In 1908, she published a series

1 Pollak 1928, p. 3.

2 'Schulzeugnisse. 1875–1889'.

3 'Mitgliedsbücher, Mitglieds- und Delegiertenkarten. 1909, 1922–1928'.

4 Kautsky 1929a; Kautsky (ed.) 1975.

of articles on school meals in the socialist women's journal *Die Gleichheit*, edited by Clara Zetkin.⁵ She also briefly served as a Berlin city councillor for the Independent Social-Democratic Party.⁶ After Karl Kautsky was removed from his editorial position at *Die Neue Zeit*, Karl and Luise moved to Vienna, where she was politically active in socialist circles, publishing a number of articles on women within the socialist movement.

Luise played an important role within the socialist movement narrating the stories of prominent women within the movement and focusing on their personal lives and intellectual contributions.⁷ She was also a nodal point in the social network of the movement, hosting hundreds of members at her house and maintaining political and personal relationships through letters and postcards.⁸ She was much admired by those around her and was described by the Nobel Prize winner for Literature, Romain Rolland, as 'the soul of international Marxism'. For Rolland, she was 'completely unpretentious, very intelligent ... she speaks fluent French. Everything that she says is interesting, lively, simple, rich in memories'.⁹ Through her life's work, Luise Kautsky became a leading figure in socialist women's circles and frequently attended socialist conferences, including as an invited guest delegate to the Second Congress of the Socialist Workers' Movement in 1925 in Marseille and the Third Congress in 1928 in Brussels.¹⁰ Given this significant contribution to European political life, how did this eminent woman, who died in early December 1944 in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, end up omitted from the history of the socialist movement?

Like many wives of famous male theorists, Luise Kautsky's intellectual labour and achievements were overshadowed by those of her husband. None of the major books on Karl Kautsky make a case for the influence of Luise Kautsky or pay tribute to her contribution to his career.¹¹ Not only has her labour towards her husband's theoretical output been ignored, but her own writings, translations, book reviews and other scholarly work have been marginalised in the socialist canon. As a result, despite her contemporaries' view of her as an

5 'Belegexemplare von Artikel von Luise Kautsky in Zeitschriften und Zeitungen. 1907–1928'.

6 Regneri 2013, p. 34. See also *Vorwärts* 1924.

7 See the various articles on socialist women collected in: 'Manuskripte von Luise Kautsky', *Karl Kautsky Papers*. Inventory numbers 2180–2218. International Institute for Social Research, Amsterdam.

8 See: 'Briefe von/an Luise Kautsky', *Karl Kautsky Papers*. Inventory numbers 810–1485. International Institute for Social Research, Amsterdam.

9 Rolland 1954, p. 869.

10 'Mitgliedsbücher, Mitglieds- und Delegiertenkarten. 1909, 1922–1928'.

11 Steenson 1978; Salvadori 1979; Hünlich 1981; Gilcher-Holtey 1986; Geary 1987; Kautsky 1994.

indispensable socialist figure, Luise Kautsky is rarely properly acknowledged in histories of the socialist movement. In the 1982 five-volume edition of the letters of Rosa Luxemburg published by the Institute for Marxism-Leninism, Luise Kautsky is listed in the register solely as 'Wife of Karl Kautsky'.¹² Not a single book or journal article has been devoted to her in English, and none of her writings, aside from her edited collection of Rosa Luxemburg's letters, have been translated from German into English. In German, a handful of articles have been published, alongside one recent short biographical work.¹³ From 2015, her collected works have begun to appear in German under the Berlin-based publishers Heptagon.

This article adopts a feminist historical methodology that draws on recent attempts to recover the legacy of 'wives of the canon' who have received insufficient attention due to their perceived subordinate status to their husbands.¹⁴ One aspect of this research programme has been the laudable effort to expand the canon to include contributions of female writers.¹⁵ However, criticisms of the biases of the tradition extend even deeper. More precisely, Jennifer Forestal and Menaka Philips have interrogated the persistent preference within academia for great theoretical texts written by solitary male authors over other forms of collaborative research.¹⁶ In a detailed examination of the role that Mary Mottley, Alexis de Tocqueville's wife, played in the production of his work, Ross Carroll raises questions 'about the gendered aspects of how intellectual labor has itself been identified and evaluated in studies of the canon'.¹⁷ This latest wave of scholarship has sought to draw attention to the informal roles that wives have undertaken in the production of knowledge. In many cases, this contribution has stretched far beyond the fulfilment of domestic chores and the provision of psychological support, and has included administrative duties, letter-writing, research, discussion during the writing process, typing, editing, and sometimes collaboration and unacknowledged co-authorship.

For Luise Kautsky, her role as the '*Helferin*' of Karl Kautsky extended to undertaking a wide range of both domestic and academic tasks.¹⁸ Not only did

12 Adler, Laschitzka and Radzun (eds.) 1982–4.

13 Adelsberger 1945; Miller 1992, pp. 391–9; Miller 1993, pp. 147–53; Langkau-Alex 1998, pp. 49–68; Hertrampf 2011, pp. 22–30; Regneri 2013. Her collected works began to be published in German in 2015 by Heptagon publishers, Berlin.

14 See the recent cluster, 'Recovering Philosophy's "Wives of the Canon"' in *Hypatia*, edited by Jennifer Forestal and Menaka Philips.

15 See, for example, Duke University's 'Project Vox'.

16 Forestal and Philips 2018, pp. 587–92.

17 Carroll 2018, pp. 643–62.

18 Pollak 1928, p. 3.

Luise Kautsky run the household, raise their three sons and attend to the frequent guests at their home, she undertook a sizeable portion of the administrative academic labour that enabled her husband to produce such an enormous intellectual output. She would often write his correspondence and took care of the many matters that arose in the editing, publication, dissemination and archiving of the famous Marxist theorist's work. Furthermore, evidence from Karl, Luise and their mutual friends suggests that Karl held Luise in high regard for her intellect and political judgement. She often read his drafts, suggested edits and collaborated with him on his writings.¹⁹

However, the role of Luise Kautsky must also be situated within a broader theoretical framework of social reproduction. The Kautskys employed one maid, Kreszenzia 'Zenzi' Wetschenbacher, who was the family cook, referred to by Luise as 'our faithful domestic fairy'.²⁰ So it is not entirely accurate to say that Luise Kautsky ran the domestic side of their life single-handedly. Karl Kautsky's output and reputation as a theorist relied on a whole platform of reproductive work done by women who cooked, cleaned, shopped, washed and did everything needed to keep the household functioning. In both his own accounts of his life and in later interpretations, the material foundations of the family's daily existence have been ignored. Luise's privileged position as a skilled and educated woman who could speak foreign languages and had considerable academic talent also relied on growing up in her own bourgeois family with domestic servants and access to education and leisure time.²¹ Thus, Luise Kautsky's achievements can also be seen to rest on the reproductive work done by others.

This article aims to uncover Luise Kautsky's role in the socialist movement based on an examination of the abundance of documents on her life in the Kautsky Archives at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. Luise Kautsky wrote hundreds of pages of essays, magazine articles and books over the course of 40 years. Most of this work exists only in German in these archives. Research reveals a number of important issues that call for a reassessment of the position of Luise Kautsky, firstly in the production of Karl Kautsky's work, but also in the broader socialist movement.

The article also seeks to situate Luise Kautsky's life in relation to other women in the socialist movement and to contrast her circumstances and mentality as a woman in a male-dominated environment with those of her female comrades. In many respects, Luise Kautsky's social role and attitudes were

19 Friedrich Adler, in Adler (ed.) 1945, p. 7.

20 Luise Kautsky, 'Introduction', in Kautsky (ed.) 1975, p. 19.

21 Regneri 2013, pp. 9–10.

more typical of socialist women than those of her friend, Rosa Luxemburg. Women within the German socialist movement tended to be married – usually to socialists – and the majority were housewives rather than factory workers or intellectuals.²² In spite of the German Social-Democratic Party's progressive policies on women's emancipation, socialist women's organisations remained dependent on the male-dominated socialist party, which failed to tackle the issue of women's oppression in the family.²³ The socialist women's movement was critical of the bourgeois feminist movement for their silence and complicity on questions of class, but continued to struggle for the emancipation of women within the socialist movement. While Luise Kautsky would not have identified as a feminist, she struggled for women's emancipation as an essential aspect of a social revolution.

The article proceeds as follows. First, it argues that Luise Kautsky's role in developing, writing, editing and disseminating the work of Karl Kautsky has been insufficiently appreciated. Adopting a feminist historical lens to uncover the unacknowledged intellectual labour of women, in particular the wives of 'great men', the article reassesses her relationship to Karl Kautsky and his writings. It argues that the two worked within a division of labour on a single intellectual project, a project to which Luise contributed a significant share of the work. Second, the article claims Luise Kautsky played an invaluable practical role as the hub of an international network of socialist scholars and activists, acting as mediator, translator and middle point through her extensive correspondence and by hosting countless members of this network at her house. Finally, the article recovers her labour as a writer, editor and translator and calls for renewed attention to her intellectual activities and to her as an independent figure of historical analysis. In this way, the article aims to bring to light the intellectual labour and achievements of a leading member of the socialist movement who suffered misogyny and discrimination in her own time and has been since excluded from histories of the movement.

2 Reassessing the Relationship between Luise and Karl Kautsky

Existing accounts of Luise Kautsky fail to capture the significant role that she played in the production and dissemination of Karl Kautsky's work. The article reconstructs from the evidence available what is known about their private and political relationship in order to shed new light on Luise's informal role as

²² Evans 1979, pp. 218–20.

²³ Honeycutt 1979, p. 31.

Karl Kautsky's personal secretary, editor and collaborator, which is frequently overlooked in favour of her role as housekeeper and the mother of their three sons. I seek to highlight the important intellectual labour performed by Luise Kautsky in relation to Karl Kautsky's enormous theoretical output, which I argue was only possible because of her work. In so doing, the article questions the gendered nature of intellectual labour and highlights valuable forms of work typically undertaken by women which were rarely acknowledged.

Luise and Karl Kautsky had a happy, although at times strained marriage. The two enjoyed a comfortable and pleasant life together, but Karl was frequently preoccupied with his work and Luise felt confined by the rigid gender norms to which Karl and others expected her to conform.²⁴ The pair wed on 23 April 1890, which, in 1904, Luise still looked back on with satisfaction due to her luck in finding such a compatible companion: 'I wonder so often why precisely it was my humble self that in this world full of duds found such a prize.'²⁵ Karl also professed his happiness in a letter to Eduard Bernstein in which he underlined his intellectual partnership with his wife: 'how I see it, Luise has written completely the same as I, two souls and one thought!'²⁶ Reports from friends also attest to the many years of joy that Luise and Karl Kautsky shared in Stuttgart, Berlin and Vienna with their three sons and surrounded by their friends and comrades in the socialist movement. Oda Olberg believed that their relationship was based on 'a very romantic bond of love' and described their years in Vienna together as 'a sunny autumn' of their lives.²⁷

Yet there were also ongoing tensions in the marriage in part due to Luise's strong intellect and desire to broaden her horizons beyond the typical role of housewife. Luise was conscious of the sexism and discrimination that existed within the socialist movement and the practical limitations it placed on her ambitions. When Luise and Karl travelled to Georgia in 1920, Luise remarked on how the 'spirit of rivalry between women and men, which still haunts the socialist parties of Europe today', appeared to be absent in the gender relations of the Georgians.²⁸ Around 1896 the Kautskys contemplated a move to London in order to provide Luise with new opportunities – a change they did not end up making – which Luise regretted a year later: 'and yet, a soft voice in my heart

24 Hertrampf 2011, p. 24.

25 Luise Kautsky to Victor Adler, attached to a letter from Karl Kautsky to Viktor Adler on 18 October 1904, in Adler (ed.) 1954, p. 435.

26 Karl Kautsky, letter to Eduard Bernstein, 17 December 1896, in Schelz-Brandenburg and Thurn (eds.) 2003, p. 336.

27 Oda Olberg, in Adler (ed.) 1945, p. 15.

28 Kautsky 1921.

still speaks longingly of London'.²⁹ With Karl's focus on his theoretical work and Luise's ongoing frustration with her position, the two moved to Berlin in 1897 where Luise felt more stimulated by the vibrant environment and started work as a translator and writer.

However, this was not the end of their troubles. Rosa Luxemburg disapproved of what she saw as Karl's overbearing influence on Luise and encouraged her to assert her personal independence and emancipate herself from his personality.³⁰ By 1908 her sons were reaching an age where they needed her less and she yearned for a new life. During this year, Luise separated from her husband for a brief period to live with Karl's brother, Hans, a talented painter with whom Luise felt she had a strong connection. She wrote several articles for *Die Gleichheit* and even considered moving back to Stuttgart to work as an editor on this journal with Clara Zetkin.³¹ It is not clear from the available evidence why she finally resolved to return to Karl. It was probable that in spite of the difficulties, there was still much she valued in this partnership on an intellectual and emotional level.

Karl Kautsky admired his wife and valued her opinion and political judgement. Sources indicate that almost everything he wrote was first read, criticised and edited by her. At the beginning of the first volume of *Die Materialistische Geschichtsauffassung*, Karl Kautsky wrote a dedication to his wife: 'This book I dedicate to my dear Luise, the mother of my sons, the faithful comrade, the tireless and understanding helper in my work, the enthusiastic, brave advocate of our common ideals.'³² In this work, Karl Kautsky suggests that his wife and he possessed a shared political outlook and also alludes to their collaborative work. This praise stands in notable contrast with his silence in two autobiographical pieces in which he recounts both his personal life and theoretical trajectory and fails to mention the work or influence of Luise Kautsky.³³

The debt that Karl owed Luise was more clearly articulated by their friends. For example, Oda Olberg wrote:

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- 29 Luise Kautsky, letter to Eduard and Regine Bernstein, attached to a letter from Karl Kautsky to Eduard Bernstein on 18 July 1897, in Schelz-Brandenburg and Thurn (eds.) 2003, p. 428.
 - 30 Nettl 1996, p. 411.
 - 31 Rosa Luxemburg, letter to Clara Zetkin, 27 October 1908, in Adler, Laschitzka and Radzun (eds.) 1982–4, Volume 2, pp. 384, 392.
 - 32 Kautsky 1927.
 - 33 Kautsky 1902, pp. 355–60; Kautsky 2019, pp. 287–322. Note that the first autobiography only covers the course of his life up until 1883.

Karl Kautsky could not have done what he did without this woman who could attune to his character, who was able to hold much harshness and disturbances at a distance with her robust health, and who cherished and cared for him, as the trustee of the values of his mind.³⁴

Friedrich Adler described Luise Kautsky as Karl's 'brilliant second' and recalled that Luise was always the first to read his writing and offer him her verdict which he highly valued.³⁵ This close working relationship was known not only to their close friends, but across the party. On 10 August 1924, the editors at *Vorwärts* paid tribute to Luise Kautsky:

How high [Karl] Kautsky holds the judgement of his wife, her clear mind, her knowledge of people, is proved by the fact that he almost never published an essay or a book or even sent any politically important letter without first presenting it to his wife for examination.³⁶

Luise was so trusted by Karl that she spoke on his behalf at the Second National Congress of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in April 1919 on account of his illness.³⁷

In a newspaper article written in 1918, Luise Kautsky recounts some of the duties she performed over the course of their marriage:

I do in the Foreign Office nothing other than what I have been used to for nearly 30 years now, namely to handle the correspondence of my husband, insofar as it does not concern theoretical questions, to receive all of the many people whose wishes I can fulfil due to my familiarity with the circumstances and personalities of the party and the international, to deal with all of the incidentals that come with such an extensive bureaucratic apparatus, which could distract him from his strenuous intellectual activity, and I do all of this as before although now without a salary, which I particularly emphasise, to counter the deliberately spread spiteful lies about Social-Democratic nepotism.³⁸

34 Oda Olberg, in Adler (ed.) 1945, p. 14.

35 Friedrich Adler, in Adler (ed.) 1945, p. 7.

36 *Vorwärts* 1924.

37 See Zentralrat 1919, pp. 224–30.

38 Kautsky 1918.

This extensive list reveals just how essential the labour of Luise Kautsky was to Karl's scholarly work. He could not have been such a prolific writer without his private secretary carrying out much of the day-to-day administrative tasks in his intellectual production. She also played a prominent role in managing their correspondence, both in responding to letters addressed to both of them and also assisting Karl with his own personal letters. Additionally, she undertook all of the domestic work such as raising their three boys, hosting many visitors in their home and organising the family's affairs.

Luise also played a vital role in the editorial and dissemination phase of his work. She would often work with publishers and editors to ensure the timely and accurate publication of his writings. Following his death, she also ensured that all of his works were properly archived in the Kautsky archives in Amsterdam. She was aware of the importance of their work and would save newspaper articles, clippings and correspondence. As the rich archival deposit of the family's letters, articles and personal documents can attest, Luise was a skilled academic manager and archivist. She frequently worked at the archive in Amsterdam on the Kautsky papers.³⁹

Reflecting on the multitude of tasks carried out by Luise Kautsky calls for a reassessment of what we understand by intellectual labour. Feminist historians of political thought have highlighted the urgent need to reconsider the types of labour historically undertaken by women, which were undervalued and ignored despite their importance to the production of more theoretically inclined works. Observing the bias in favour of abstract, theoretical texts in the history of political thought, Jennifer Forestal and Menaka Philips argue:

The implication is, of course, that people must have produced something extraordinary to be worthy of remembering. More precisely, academia's focus on the production of 'great texts' by solitary (male) authors has minimized other modes of intellectual work – notably, that of collaboration. Thus, as the articles variously discuss, the reduction of wives and partners to biographical trivia or background information tends to work in the service of producing the image of a single heroic intellectual – an image that is therefore inherently gendered.⁴⁰

This bias has negatively impacted on the historical legacy of Luise Kautsky whose collaboration with Karl Kautsky has fallen precisely into this category.

39 Langkau-Alex 1998, p. 63.

40 Forestal and Philips 2018, p. 588.

To appreciate adequately Luise's significance to the socialist tradition requires re-orienting our understanding of valuable intellectual labour.

Lastly, Susanne Miller has persuasively argued that Luise Kautsky played a decisive role in contributing to the image of Karl Kautsky not only as a master theoretician but as a warm and loving human being.⁴¹ After the death of Engels, Karl Kautsky, editor of the leading socialist publication *Die Neue Zeit*, was widely regarded as the most authoritative voice on the interpretation of Marxism. Socialists from across Europe would ask him questions on socialist theory and strategy and would address him as 'Most Revered Master' and 'Comrade and Teacher' in their letters. He was not only praised as a scholar, but was clearly loved as a friend and personality. Yet it was Luise who conducted a large portion of Karl's correspondence (around 1,000 letters a year in relation to *Die Neue Zeit* alone) and offered hospitality to the many visitors who regularly stayed in their home. Miller correctly points out that this reputation of Karl Kautsky and the many glowing reports of guests' time spent in the Kautsky house were largely on account of Luise's personality, domestic labour and social skills.

3 The Soul of International Marxism

Luise Kautsky's strongest skillset was her extraordinary ability to connect with people from a variety of backgrounds, build social networks and maintain personal relationships. Public celebrations of Luise Kautsky, on her sixtieth birthday and in her obituaries, for example, pointed to her seemingly effortless work as a mediator and translator, both metaphorically and literally, across national and political divides.⁴² Luise had a way with people that made them feel at ease, listened to, and part of a broader project of international socialism. She accomplished this through running her home as a guesthouse for visitors and through her international correspondence with over 500 people from the socialist movement. Described in her senior years as a 'living tradition' of socialism, Luise Kautsky embodied a truly internationalist form of life, opening her home as a salon to visitors from across the world:

Her house was the centre point of international Marxism and even more than her husband, Luise was the soul of this circle. Her vivacious temperament, her spirit, her cheerfulness and cordiality, her warm interest

41 Miller 1993, p. 149.

42 *Vorwärts* 1924.

in everyone she came in contact with, made everyone immediately feel at home with the Kautskys.⁴³

Luise's position in this movement was greatly assisted by the fact that, on account of her bourgeois background, she had strong language abilities in French, English and Italian. As a result, she was often a delegate at conferences and met many of the leading figures of international socialism. She befriended people from different countries and was knowledgeable about personalities and affairs across the socialist movement. Due to her attendance at many of the women's conferences, Luise Kautsky was particularly knowledgeable about women in the movement and was known as an international authority on this subject. Her role in this network blurred the lines between the personal and the political as she often maintained relationships with people through political conflicts and acted as a middle point and mediator between different people and political positions.

Luise Kautsky also maintained close friendships through letter-writing. An examination of her large collection of letters reveals friendships across the European socialist movement in which Luise would be asked for advice, undertake small duties, send and receive holiday greetings cards, thank-you letters and invitations, but also would discuss political issues of the day and personalities in the Social-Democratic Party. While many of these letters are quite short and deal with personal matters, she always asked about what was going on in the movement and maintained a detailed mental record of party affairs.

One example of her mediating efforts is the special role she played in the mending of fences between Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein by writing the majority of letters between the Kautskys and Bernsteins in the 1923–31 period.⁴⁴ During the revisionist debate Luise Kautsky regretted how her relationship with the Bernsteins was affected by the political disagreement. The famous reconciliation of these two men towards the end of their lives owes a great deal to work undertaken by Luise Kautsky in maintaining a connection during the years of political conflict and in insisting on a reunion. Of the 51 letters written during this period, Karl Kautsky wrote only 8 of them. Luise Kautsky sent holiday greetings and thank-you cards, but she also endeavoured to create points of contact with the Bernsteins and discussed political matters covered in the social-democratic press.

43 Etty 1996, p. 555.

44 Görtz (ed.) 2011, p. xxi.

Another important relationship that Luise maintained was with Rosa Luxemburg, long into her acrimonious dispute with Karl Kautsky. Luxemburg and Luise Kautsky tended not to mention party-political matters in their exchanges and kept a warm and intimate friendship despite the discord between Luxemburg and Luise's husband. The tone of her description of the final days of Luxemburg's life suggests Luise held a greater sympathy for Karl Kautsky's theoretical and strategic positions than that of Luxemburg:

Together with Liebknecht she now planned a bold public action, for the slow, underground propaganda, the results of which could not become apparent very quickly, tried the patience of these two fiery spirits too sorely ... and all attempts on the part of the late Hugo Haase, leader of the Independents, and his followers to bridge the chasm were doomed to failure because of the obstinacy of the Spartacists.⁴⁵

Luise Kautsky nevertheless maintained a close relationship with Luxemburg and continued to admire her greatly as a political figure and personal friend. She decided to overlook the political differences that had arisen between them for the sake of the friendship.

There is evidence that Luise Kautsky also attempted to play a more active and official role within the party but was on several occasions discouraged by party officials. In 1908 Luise Kautsky requested to be a guest student in a training course of the party school. August Bebel wrote to her and stated that his refusal had nothing to do with her abilities: 'We would be accused of favouritism, partiality and so forth. I need not say that I personally had not the slightest objection to you; on the contrary, without flattery, you are far more capable than most of those who currently attend the course.'⁴⁶ Her friend, Rosa Luxemburg, insisted that she 'must be more direct with the party organisation', but her relationship with Karl Kautsky proved more of a hindrance than an asset due to concerns of accusations of nepotism.⁴⁷ As was noted on her sixtieth birthday, 'as passionately as Luise Kautsky had always taken part in all political events, and especially in the fate, struggles, and arguments of German Social Democracy, all public party activity was denied to her.'⁴⁸

45 Luise Kautsky, 'Introduction', in Kautsky (ed.) 1975, p. 19.

46 August Bebel, letter to Luise Kautsky, 11 October 1908, in Adler (ed.) 1954, p. 199.

47 Rosa Luxemburg, letter to Luise Kautsky, 20 April 1908, in Adler, Laschitzka and Radzun (eds.) 1982–4, Volume 2, p. 333.

48 *Vorwärts* 1924.

The one official position Luise was allowed to hold was as a member of the SPD's Education Committee of Greater Berlin between 1911 and 1917.⁴⁹ In April 1917, the SPD split and Luise and Karl Kautsky became members of the newly formed Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (USPD).⁵⁰ During the German Revolution, on 12 November 1918, she was assigned by Hugo Haase to work in the new socialist government as the 'highest political oversight of monitoring the Central Telegraph Office'.⁵¹ However, she was only in this post for ten days before she accompanied Karl Kautsky to work on the causes of the outbreak of the First World War in the Foreign Ministry.

After the revolution, Luise briefly worked as a city councillor for the Charlottenburg Town Council [*Stadtverordnetenversammlung*]. The German Revolution of 1918 instituted women's suffrage and opened new opportunities for women within the socialist party. Luise Kautsky put herself forward as a candidate for the USPD. Although the USPD achieved an excellent result at elections on 23 February 1919, Luise Kautsky was the eighteenth candidate on their list and therefore failed to gain a seat. But on 3 December 1918, after a new vote, Luise Kautsky was confirmed as a member of the council and sat on more than ten meetings until her final meeting on 14 July 1920. She participated on a number of matters during her time as a councillor including giving a speech on 18 February 1920 on the topic of a large supply of milk for pregnant women, children and the sick to the sum of 500,000 Marks, and voting on issues of electoral rules on 15 July 1920.⁵² When her husband fell ill, she gave up her seat on 12 March 1921 and accompanied him on a trip to the Caucasus. When the Kautskys settled back in Vienna in 1924 Luise soon joined the Social-Democratic Workers' Party of Austria (SDAP) and became a supporting member of the German-Austrian Young Socialist Workers' Association. Aside from this, she did not take up any official position within the party, although by this stage Luise was a highly respected figure in the party who had connections with leading members, both young and old.

Luise Kautsky's potential career either as a theorist or a functionary within the party was restricted by her role as wife and subordinate to her husband. This occasionally emerged as an external barrier to her participation, such as with the claims of avoiding nepotism, but it also put up internal mental barriers to her playing a more prominent role. At key moments when an

49 Regneri 2013, p. 30.

50 'Pässe und Ausweise. 1918, 1920.'

51 'Pässe und Ausweise. 1918, 1920.' See also: Luise Kautsky, 'Eine Stunde der Erbauung', *Die Frau in der Metallindustrie* № 1 (1931), p. 6. *Karl Kautsky Papers*. Inventory number 1975. International Institute for Social Research, Amsterdam.

52 Regneri 2013, p. 34.

opportunity for more rewarding work presented itself, such as the position at the Central Telegraph Office, she resigned to prioritise her husband's health and career. Socialist men within the SPD desired women who would be help-mates in the socialist struggle and who would play a nurturing and supportive role within the family.⁵³ Luise Kautsky tended to accept traditional values regarding a woman's position as mother and carer. She subtly chided Rosa Luxemburg for her initial dismissal of her on account of the fact that she wore an apron around the house and followed many of the norms of a typical German housewife.⁵⁴ While it is clear that Luise Kautsky desired a more active and political life, a combination of internal and external barriers seems to have prevented her from accomplishing more in the public sphere – and in this respect her story is typical of socialist women of her generation and social class.

4 Luise Kautsky's Intellectual Labour

Luise Kautsky was not only a talented communicator and networker, she also wrote numerous articles and translated Marxist theory from English and French into German. She began her translation work tentatively, unconfident in her abilities, but was spurred on by encouragement from her friends and husband. Her first translation was a book by Paul Lafargue, which appeared in 1909.⁵⁵ More work soon followed with a translation of Louis Boudin's *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx* (1909) and another book by Gilbert Murray published in 1922.⁵⁶ But Luise Kautsky's crowning achievement as a translator was the enormous project of translating over 1,000 pages of Marx and Engels' English writings of the 1852–62 period into German for the 1917 version of Marx and Engels' collected works.⁵⁷ She also completed an important translation of Karl Marx's Inaugural Address of the International Workingman's Association, published in 1922.⁵⁸ Luise Kautsky was a skilled translator and enjoyed the work. Upon seeing the final product of her labour, Rosa Luxemburg congratulated her on the significant achievement: 'The two volumes of your Marx, which lie before me, show me first, what an enormous job you have done, which one cannot imagine, until one sees it in physical form.'⁵⁹ However, Luxemburg was also

53 Honeycutt 1979, p. 31.

54 Luise Kautsky, 'Introduction', in Kautsky (ed.) 1975.

55 Lafargue 1909.

56 Boudin 1909; Murray 1922.

57 Marx and Engels 1917.

58 Marx 1922.

59 Rosa Luxemburg, letter to Luise Kautsky, December 1916, in Luxemburg 1923.

critical of the amount of translation Luise Kautsky accepted and thought her real skills lay elsewhere:

Generally speaking, it annoys me that you let people pile one dreary translation job after another on you. What do you get from that? What do you learn from this mechanical labour fit for a beast of burden? Really it's a waste of your time and energy.⁶⁰

In another letter to Luise Kautsky, Luxemburg was more precise with her prescriptions: 'I would like that you concentrate your time and energy in the beginning on two things: writing and agitation in women's circles, which is a good preparation for further things.'⁶¹ But Luise Kautsky believed that she did not have the temperament or the desire to engage in political agitation and public speeches.

She understood that her talent resided not in political propaganda but in her capacity to tell captivating stories of people's lives. Reflecting on Rosa Luxemburg's advice, Luise Kautsky wrote:

Her contention was that my chief strength lay in my emphasis upon the personal note; that my articles on the occasion of Clara Zetkin's fiftieth and Bebel's seventieth birthdays, as well as on the anniversary of Julie Bebel's death had proven this to her satisfaction. Besides, she never tired of having me tell her about my youth and about other experiences of mine.⁶²

The majority of her articles were published between 1924 and 1937, during which she wrote extensively about women in the socialist movement. One of her most common of pieces was portraits of women either delivered at international congresses or published in journals. While Kautsky did not ignore leading socialist men (she wrote, for example, about August Bebel, Paul Levi, Viktor Adler and Hugo Haase), she consistently focused on the role of women in the movement.⁶³

One is immediately struck by the sheer number of women within the socialist movement who appear in her articles and with whom Luise Kautsky held a personal connection. To offer the reader an indication of the range of women,

60 Rosa Luxemburg, letter to Luise Kautsky, 14 May 1909, in Luxemburg 2013, p. 687.

61 Rosa Luxemburg, letter to Luise Kautsky, in Luxemburg 1923, p. 121.

62 Luise Kautsky, 'Introduction', in Kautsky (ed.) 1975, p. 2.

63 See Luise Kautsky, 'August Bebel und sein Frauenbuch'; Luise Kautsky, 'Hugo Hasse zum Gedächtnis (1929)'; Luise Kautsky, 'Erinnerung an Paul Levi (1930)'; Luise Kautsky, 'Meine Erinnerungen an Viktor Adler'.

Kautsky devoted considerable attention to Jenny Marx, Eleanor Marx, Helene Demuth, Minna Kautsky, Julie Bebel, Emma Ihrer, Clara Zetkin, Vera Zasulich, Luise Zietz, Nina Bang, Anna Ingermann, Rosa Luxemburg, Oda Olberg, Fruma Frumkin, Eva Broido, Evstolia Ragozinnikowa, Adelheid Popp, Emma Adler and Alexandra Kollontai.⁶⁴ Luise Kautsky's articles seek to recover women's voices from the margins of the movement and focus on their own narratives and achievements.

Luise Kautsky was an excellent judge of character and could capture her subjects in stunning portraits. What we see in Kautsky's subjects is not the description of a personal sphere cut off from the political, but rather the painting of a rich tapestry that revealed the intricate connections between the two. Her writing moved between different frames, reflecting on a person's character and then describing how their life was part of a broader political movement and historical narrative. Personal anecdotes were interspersed with frequent asides on gender relations, power structures and political observations on their personal lives. She did not write in the language of abstract systems and doctrines, but instead stayed closer to the basic mechanics of human motives, interests and desires. Luise Kautsky 'did not need a theoretical guideline to act as a socialist. She required only to be herself and to follow her inner law.'⁶⁵

In the unpublished manuscript, *Die Frauen um Karl Marx* (The Women around Karl Marx), Luise Kautsky wrote not about the figure of Karl Marx or how women close to him influenced his work, but about the lives of the women themselves (Jenny von Westphalen, Jenny Marx, Laura Marx, Eleanor Marx, and their housekeeper, Helene Demuth). What is intriguing about this text is the absence of Karl Marx, who is not even mentioned except in relation to the personal narratives and intellectual contributions of these women. While women usually appear briefly in intellectual histories of influential male theorists to add colour and a personal touch to their narratives, Luise Kautsky inverts this trope to centre these women's lives. When she writes about Marx's wife, Jenny, Kautsky's recognition of the important role that Jenny played in Marx's life mirrors similar descriptions that friends made of Luise Kautsky herself:

Whoever writes about Marx never forgets to add that he could never have done what he did without his wife. She was his comforter, advisor, assistant with work, mother and lover at the same time.⁶⁶

64 See, for example, the articles collected in Kautsky 2018.

65 Oda Olberg, 'Ein Bild der Persönlichkeit', in Adler (ed.) 1945, p. 13.

66 Luise Kautsky, 'Die Frauen um Karl Marx'.

Luise Kautsky also ensured to pay tribute to the Marx family's housekeeper, Helene Demuth, or 'Lenchen' as she was affectionately known. She emphasised Lenchen's loyalty and dedication to the Marx family and how she cared for Karl Marx in his final years right up until his death. Recounting a story from Karl Kautsky's brief visits to the Marx household, Luise tells of how Lenchen was treated not as a maid, but as a friend: 'She was not only concerned with washing, cooking, and mending, rather she was gifted with a great intelligence with which she took a lively interest in the spiritual life of the house.'⁶⁷

Rosa Luxemburg was the most important subject of Luise Kautsky's writings: 'For my whole being, yes, the whole content of my life has been immensely enriched by my connection and friendship with Rosa Luxemburg.'⁶⁸ Due to this friendship, Kautsky was considered an international authority on her friend and was requested by numerous European newspapers and magazines to contribute articles on Luxemburg's life and legacy. She wrote over two dozen articles on Rosa Luxemburg following her death and on its tenth anniversary in 1929. Luise Kautsky's book, *Rosa Luxemburg, ein Gedenkbuch*, offered one of the most perceptive and rich insights into Luxemburg's character.⁶⁹ Luise Kautsky proposed:

The thing that characterised her before everything else, and that gave her whole being such buoyancy, was just this: while at work or at leisure, whether stirred by the emotions of love or of hate, she was always at the same white heat; in fact, one of her favourite sayings was, 'One must be like a candle that is burning at both ends.' And this white heat that radiated from her proved contagious to her entire surroundings. She was a wizard in the art of winning persons over, provided, of course, that she cared about winning them.⁷⁰

Luise Kautsky had a highly developed emotional intelligence, which she vividly portrayed in her writing on Luxemburg:

The secret of the magic effect of her personality was partly this: she was able, as few persons were, to interest herself in other human beings in a perfectly human way and to treat them humanely. She possessed the true gift of listening with concentrated attention, and just as her ear

67 Luise Kautsky, 'Die Frauen um Karl Marx'.

68 Luise Kautsky, 'Introduction', in Kautsky (ed.) 1975, p. 3.

69 Kautsky 1929a.

70 Luise Kautsky, 'Introduction', in Kautsky (ed.) 1975, p. 8.

was accessible to every complainant, so also her heart went out to every human being in distress.⁷¹

Kautsky also wrote on women's role within International Socialism. In a speech on Russian women of the socialist movement, Kautsky offered a comparative analysis on gender relations in different countries across the world. 'The Russian revolutionary intellectuals were the first in the world to give full equality to the women in their ranks,' began Kautsky, 'the voices of women within these circles ... had as much weight in the deliberations as those of their male colleagues.'⁷² She argued that both the effects of the war, with women being forced to take up different professions, and the political consequences of the Russian Revolution led to greater freedom and independence for women in Russia than in Europe:

As far as the intellectuals are concerned, of course, women can now hold more offices than was possible under Tsarism. We emphasised at the outset that the value of women in Russian intellectual circles was always much higher than in other countries. And this has also been maintained under the regime of the Bolsheviks. In Russia today, there are women in influential positions.⁷³

She also noted that Russian women had much easier access to abortions, which were available from doctors at public clinics with a medical certificate. There was also less stigma attached to asking for divorces and requesting new marriages. Her view of emancipated Russian women was confirmed by her trip to Georgia where she saw how 'the example of the Russian student, who is completely equal to her male counterparts, probably made its way to our fighting comrades in Georgia'.⁷⁴ For Kautsky, Georgian women had 'moved from the narrow sphere of the household into the sphere of public effectiveness'.⁷⁵ She observed that in the Constituent Assembly, as in trade unions and co-operative bodies, women had strong and capable representatives in numbers outweighing their German counterparts.

Her experiences in Georgia, and in hearing about Russian women, must have been difficult for Luise Kautsky to reconcile, as some of these women, at

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Luise Kautsky, 'Russische Frauen von gestern und heute'.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Kautsky 1921.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

least in the intellectual circles, lived the type of life to which Kautsky herself under different circumstances may well have aspired:

the ambitions of the modern woman are to operate outside the narrow circle of her domesticity. The cause of this manifestation everywhere is psychologically easy to explain. With the awakened self-confidence goes hand in hand, of course, a tremendous urge for independence. During the war, millions of women experienced first-hand what they can do themselves if they stand firmly on their feet.⁷⁶

Luise Kautsky also offered a unique perspective on the importance of socialist policies at the municipal level. While many writers within the movement focused on the necessity of the nationalisation of industries and the socialisation of the economy, in 'Vienna under the Red Flag', one of only two articles she wrote in English, Kautsky analysed the practical results of socialist policies implemented at the municipal level.⁷⁷ Before the German Revolution, due to the distorted nature of the electoral laws, socialist parties had few representatives on local councils. However, in the first vote after the Revolution in May 1919, the Austrian Social-Democratic Workers' Party achieved 54.17% of the vote. The success and popularity of their policies with the masses led to an increase in vote share to 60.37% by 1927. Following ten years of experience with socialist policies Luise Kautsky could look back and analyse the changes that had occurred within the city since the Revolution with a focus on housing, social welfare and school reforms. Her emphasis on the social-welfare aspects of socialism was strongly influenced by her experience working as a local councillor in Berlin after the German Revolution.

The socialist reforms were made possible because the Viennese municipal government has considerable power, independence and authority due to reforms made at the national level which granted it the status of a *Land*. In recounting the success of the policies, Kautsky noted the importance of the reform of the taxation system, which alleviated the heavy burden on the working classes and taxed the rich through a luxury and welfare tax. In particular, the socialist government was more strict in enforcing the collection of real-estate tax, which, due to the power of landowners, was often not collected under the previous government. Kautsky's text made clear that despite vehement opposition from the wealthy of Vienna, these reforms were successful and enabled the municipal socialists to remain both in power and improve social welfare.

⁷⁶ Luise Kautsky, 'Russische Frauen von gestern und heute'.

⁷⁷ Kautsky 1929b.

She underlined that ‘only by this fiscal system has it been possible for the city of Vienna to carry out those great measures which have earned it the proud position of being the first Socialist community to have realised a piece of Socialism on a large scale.’⁷⁸

She concentrated on socialist policy in three main areas. First, housing policy in which the government prioritised the construction of 60,000 new dwellings over five years to enable some workers to move out of their tiny and dirty living quarters and into larger and cleaner apartments. Second, greater assistance to new mothers with pre-natal care, new dental clinics, eye clinics, baths for children and inoculations against tuberculosis. In sum, ‘the Socialist administration would make it its business to look after and guide with a strong hand suffering humanity from the cradle to the grave.’⁷⁹ Third, the municipal government tackled education inequalities by allowing more working-class families to send their children to secondary schools and by upgrading old texts and methods of learning. New parent-and-teacher associations were also set up to assist in the governance of local schools. Kautsky noted that on account of these successful policies ‘Red Vienna’ had become a crucial example of the success that could be achieved under a socialist system if implemented at a larger scale.

5 Conclusion

Luise Kautsky was a modest person and in spite of her many achievements she refused requests from her friends to write her memoirs, considering herself insufficiently important to warrant such a project: ‘She [Luxemburg] has not been able to persuade me that my memoirs can lay claim to general interest, especially not in these times, when humanity has far different cares than those of concerning itself about the fate of a single person.’⁸⁰ This article has attempted to disprove this contention by outlining the many political contributions of Luise Kautsky both to the work of Karl Kautsky and to the broader socialist movement. Yet Luise Kautsky has been written out of prominent histories of the socialist movement and ignored by Kautsky scholars with regard to the production of Karl Kautsky’s intellectual output. Up to now, the main contribution Luise Kautsky has been thought to have made was in the domestic sphere of taking care of the family affairs of the Kautsky household.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Luise Kautsky, ‘Introduction’, in Kautsky (ed.) 1975, p. 3.

Uncovering the contribution of Luise Kautsky has required a double move of recovering traces of her own intellectual activities in the Kautsky archives and questioning the gendered framework of intellectual history, which enables only certain types of work to show up as important. What has been shown is that Luise Kautsky lived a rich and industrious life as a collaborator in Karl Kautsky's work and played an important role as a nodal point in the international socialist movement. First, Luise Kautsky has suffered the fate of many other wives or domestic partners of men regarded as great theorists in that her contributions to their shared intellectual project have been ignored. However, Luise Kautsky not only provided emotional and domestic support to Karl, but played an important role in discussing, writing, editing and disseminating his work. Her presence at these critical stages interrupts the typical image we have of the solitary male figure and 'great man' writing new ideas in 'great texts'.

Second, Luise Kautsky undertook important tasks within the social milieu of Social Democracy, which left less evidence and tended to be overlooked as important functions within the movement. Although she held few official roles and faced discrimination within the movement, Kautsky was the centrepiece of a large network of political agents and provided essential services to the movement through her extensive knowledge of various personalities and political events.

Luise Kautsky's legacy is indicative of many women in the socialist movement who have been left out of popular narratives. Aside from Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin, who in many respects were atypical of women of their generation, there are few well-known women within the socialist movement. A re-examination of Luise Kautsky's writings reveals a wider range of women who were not only politically active but were celebrated as important historical figures. The recovery of the political legacy of Luise Kautsky undertaken in this article contributes to important work in retrieving the forgotten narratives of women in the history of political thought.

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